

2020

The Trump Administration: Government secrecy, bureaucracy, and democracy

Logan J. Santel
University of Northern Iowa

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Copyright ©2020 Logan J. Santel

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp>

Recommended Citation

Santel, Logan J., "The Trump Administration: Government secrecy, bureaucracy, and democracy" (2020).
Graduate Research Papers. 2083.
<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/2083>

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.

The Trump Administration: Government secrecy, bureaucracy, and democracy

Abstract

Like most Americans I spent the evening of November 8th, 2016 tuned into the election night news. I was attending Kansas State University at the time, a predominantly conservative school in a predominantly conservative state. In the weeks leading up to election night, students, faculty, and staff at the University lived with strong feelings of anticipation. The two candidates stood in stark contrast to one another. Hillary Clinton stood as a franchisee candidate with political experience and an establishment feel. Donald Trump was the businessman out to drain the political “swamp” of Washington. Their divisive nature and heated political debates encouraged divided beliefs and a divided national political discourse. In this section, I will be covering Trump’s victory over Clinton, the divisive times in which we live, the system of secrecy in the United States, Weber’s theory of Bureaucracy, the term “deep state”, and the importance of democracy.

Logan J. Santel

The Trump Administration: Government Secrecy, Bureaucracy, and Democracy

Readers: Dr. Tom Hall, Dr. Ryan McGeough

University of Northern Iowa

Disclaimer

This paper has no political motivations, and does not seek to endorse, nor degrade any politician, political candidate, or political party. This paper seeks to analyze how a certain president's rhetoric has the potential to influence and shape American democracy. The ideas presented in the paper do not only apply to one politician or political party, rather the information and ideas presented can cross party lines and may be used to think critically about all political rhetoric and discourse. It is not the author's intention to undermine any political authority or chain of command. This paper is written as an academic endeavor in partial fulfillment of a Master of Arts Degree in Communication at the University of Northern Iowa. This paper does not represent the views of the United States Military, the Officer Corps and is not related to any military branch or endeavor in any manner.

Acknowledgements

My graduate school experience has been filled with meaningful and memorable experiences because of the people I have been fortunate enough to work with over my two years at the University of Northern Iowa. I have met many people on this journey and have developed and grown substantially because of them. Firstly, Dr. Tom Hall has been tremendous in onboarding me as a new graduate student and encouraging me to thrive while there. He was the first person I met upon arriving at the department and the person I have taken the most classes with over the course of my study. He is also the one who recommended and supervised this project, I cannot thank him enough for all he has done for me. In addition to Tom's help with the paper, I could not be more thankful for Ryan McGeough coming onboard after picking up the department head spot. Tom and Ryan were immensely helpful during this whole process. In addition, the other faculty in the Department of Communication at the University of Northern Iowa have contributed greatly to my intellectual and professional growth.

Dr. Kyle Rudick helped me secure an academic scholarship and graduate assistantship and afforded me an opportunity to teach almost one-hundred students during my graduate school tenure. In addition to Dr. Rudick, I have taken classes with Dr. Anelia Dimitrova, Dr. Melissa Dobosh, Dr. Danielle McGeough, Dr. Catherine Palczewski, and Dr. Ryan McGeough and I thank them all for contributing to my growth as a person. I must say my experience in the Department has exceeded my expectations. I have taken courses in several academic departments throughout my undergraduate and graduate years and none have provided me with such a supportive, friendly, and intellectually rich environment.

In addition to the wonderful Department of Communication at the University of Northern Iowa, my participation in the Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC) program should not be

overlooked. Between raising a child, being a husband, attending graduate school full-time, being a ROTC cadet, and teaching two sections of a college class, I learned how to prioritize and maximize time. I cannot thank the incredible members of the ROTC Department enough for shaping me into the person and leader I am today and will continue to strive to be throughout my military career. People like MSG Verrett, SFC Stien, LTC Harris, CPT Harrison, Maj Davis, MSG Leach, and Maj Flather worked tirelessly to ensure I was ready and capable of leading the sons and daughters of our nation. I owe a great debt to all of them.

This project was a fun and memorable way to close out my graduate career. I have incredible memories at the University of Northern Iowa and will never forget the people I interacted with. The last people I want to thank are the members of my family, to my Wife, my Son, and our parents, your support is everything. Upon completion of my degree I will be an Infantry Officer in the United States Army. I will be charged to lead and inspire America's best and will be held responsible for their well-being and safety (no small job). Like the work of this paper I intend to work hard to ensure I look at things critically and see the bigger picture whenever possible. As John F. Kennedy said, "leadership and learning are indispensable to each other".

The Trump Administration: Government Secrecy, Bureaucracy, and Democracy

Introduction

Like most Americans I spent the evening of November 8th, 2016 tuned into the election night news. I was attending Kansas State University at the time, a predominantly conservative school in a predominantly conservative state. In the weeks leading up to election night, students, faculty, and staff at the University lived with strong feelings of anticipation. The two candidates stood in stark contrast to one another. Hillary Clinton stood as a franchisee candidate with political experience and an establishment feel. Donald Trump was the businessman out to drain the political “swamp” of Washington. Their divisive nature and heated political debates encouraged divided beliefs and a divided national political discourse. In this section, I will be covering Trump’s victory over Clinton, the divisive times in which we live, the system of secrecy in the United States, Weber’s theory of Bureaucracy, the term “deep state”, and the importance of democracy.

Except for the events leading up to the U.S. Civil War, and Vietnam, perhaps no other time in U.S. history has sparked such strong divisiveness leading up to a political election. Facebook turned into a battlefield, offices and dinner tables were filled with political arguments, even family members became adversarial. Stories of kids not talking to parents and friends who are no longer friends because of their political views were common. With this national aura of divisive politics, the country hunkered down in anticipation and tuned into the election-night news. Trump was polling better than expected. The favorite was Clinton and she was expected to win, although most polls were within a margin of error that meant Donald Trump still had a chance at the presidency. *Newsweek* attempted to get ahead of the curve by printing magazines with, “Madame President” on the front with a blown-up picture of Clinton. These now recalled

magazines can be found on *eBay* for as much as three-hundred-and-fifty dollars! When Trump won, the nation was shocked. *Politico* claimed this was the biggest political upset in history. Political correspondents claim even Donald Trump himself was shocked and unprepared for what was next. There were even rumors that he wasn't going to accept the nomination and serve as president, claiming he went through the election process for purposes of self-aggrandizement. Furthermore, Hillary Clinton had not even prepared a concession speech because she was confident she would be president.

In the years leading up to the election, and years since, more divisive rhetoric has occurred. The Black Lives Matter movement responded to several viral internet videos of unarmed black men killed at the hands of police. In the fall of 2015 protests erupted on campuses around the nation beginning with the University of Missouri and Yale. In addition to racial movements taking place throughout the country, mass shootings and gun control debates blanketed news coverage for weeks. The threat of terrorism and anti-terrorism rhetoric continued to rear its ugly head in the post-9/11 security era. There were allegedly ISIS inspired attacks on American soil including the shooting in San Bernardino, California, and a gay night-club in Orlando Florida. In addition, a man with altered firearms fired from a window in Las Vegas, Nevada on an unsuspecting crowd killing forty-nine people and injuring eight-hundred-and-fifty-one people.

This intense and tumultuous election landscape set the stage for what would become a historic presidency, with Trump becoming only the third president to be impeached in the history of the United States. At the time of the election, I was shocked, barely able to comprehend that a billionaire and television personality had just become the president of the United States. Additionally, he did not leave his controversial nature behind in the election process. Once

president, he continued to speak out against his opponents, often using divisive rhetoric. It is not surprising most of the criticism surrounding Donald Trump stems from his use of controversial rhetoric. Opponents of Trump have referred to his rhetoric as racist, transphobic, and homophobic. This had led many Americans to label his remarks ‘hate speech’. Trump’s remarks have sparked many Americans to disassociate themselves with his message by adopting *Resist* and *Persist* messages. These messages have been transcribed as car stickers, magnets, pins, and apparel. These messages are intended to create unity in the movement against Donald Trump. They serve as counter-rhetoric to the messages Trump transmits from the White House.

In addition to rhetorical responses to Donald Trump, groups have mobilized around the country. Violence and destruction erupted at Middlebury College and at the University of California, Berkeley, by self-proclaimed “anti-fascist” groups. Months later, white supremacists marched with torches across the University of Virginia’s grounds. The year 2016 ended with the #MeToo movement, which was partially in response to Trump’s remarks about grabbing women inappropriately. Most of the criticism of Trump’s rhetoric is concerned with his blatant disrespect for certain identities: Latinx Culture, Women, African Americans, people from developing countries (referred to by Trump as “shithole” countries). Trump’s disrespect to a multitude of identities and his lack of acknowledgement of intersectionality has caused political controversy and fallout. The message from the White House seems clear, certain types of people are not held in as high regard as others, privileging certain groups. Criticism of Trump’s rhetoric is widespread and most popular among Trump’s political adversaries.

A less critiqued part of Trump’s rhetoric is his use of the term “deep state.” Trump has used the words “deep state” to refer to the shadowy government body that operates behind the scenes as a nebulous structure of powerful individuals, corporations, and interest groups that

operate to block or impede his political agenda. These words have been repeated frequently by Trump and his staff during media interviews and media coverage. These words are often uttered after Democrats resist his administration's political decisions and movements. It is an often-used scapegoat of Trump and his administration to shift the blame of his administration's shortcomings to the nebulous, shadowy, and invisible government that the public cannot see or understand.

To many Americans, democracy is one of the foundational characteristics in the framing of America. Democracy is a powerful word in the United States that carries a proud and protected legacy.

Democracy was the vision of the country's founders and its pioneers. It is why tens-of-thousands of settlers crossed an ocean, left everything behind, and started a new life, with large numbers of immigrants still migrating to the U.S. each year. Gone were the ways of a monarchical king who made choices for his kingdom. At our country's conception lies the clear distinction that was made between a ruling monarchy and democracy.

The framers of American government set out to develop a system of representation that was effectively "by the people." This framing gave each citizen of the United States a chance to influence government through their vote. The idea that an individual can have an impact on government is a valued and sacred ideology in the United States. Elected officials are by design, a representation of their constituents' voice. The "we the people" mentality Americans hold makes democracy a foremost value in the American mind. Democracy and individual government influence are a philosophy that has stood the test of time.

The idea of democracy has been important to the nation throughout time. The word and its meaning have played important roles in American history. Pro-war rhetoric often weaponizes

the idea of American democracy as being threatened during times of war. President Harry Truman established the “Containment Policy” before the start of the Vietnam War which argued communism needed to be contained at all costs because of the perceived “threat” to American democracy. This led to hundreds-of-thousands of American lives lost and billions of dollars wasted on foreign soil. The rhetoric of a threatened democracy was repeated during the Cold War and post-9/11 eras. America has become the world police, often ready to mobilize when ‘threats’ to democracy emerge.

Americans are passionate about the idea of democracy and will fight and die for it. But what happens when democracy is threatened on our own soil? Perhaps by our own leaders? This question is harder to answer. Central to the idea of American democracy is an informed populace as Thomas Jefferson notes:

The most effectual means of preventing [the perversion of power into tyranny are] to illuminate, as far as practicable, the minds of the people at large, and more especially to give them knowledge of those facts which history exhibits, that possessed thereby of the experience of other ages and countries, they may be enabled to know ambition under all its shapes, and prompt to exert their natural powers to defeat its purposes. (A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge, 79, Committee of the Virginia Assembly, 1779)

Information transparency is a key element to an informed and educated democracy. Part of the reason the founding fathers were hesitant to establish direct democracy was the belief that the common man could not simply possess enough knowledge to make informed voting decisions. Information transparency, and therefore government transparency is a cornerstone of American democracy.

The American government has now become so massive that the idea of transparency appears to be a far-fetched idea and hopeful ideal. As a large bureaucratic organization (with fifteen departments of the executive branch alone) the government operates in such a compartmentalized way that information sharing, especially with the average citizen, is extremely hard to achieve. As Visitchaichan (2014) notes:

The compartmentalization created by bureaucratic divisions between different hierarchical levels, functions, roles, and people tends to create barriers and stumbling blocks. One of the most famous arguments presented against the bureaucratic organization was made by social psychologist Warren Bennis. In his writings, he described the bureaucratic structure as too mechanical for the needs of modern organizations. (p. 17)

With globalization, the internet, and technological advancements, society is communicating and changing rapidly. The ability to share information and communicate instantaneously with a mass audience is easier than it ever was. One could argue the established bureaucracy and its characteristics have not adapted to meet these rapid evolutions. The inflexibility of the American government is amplified due partially to the over-encompassing classification system the Government uses to prevent information from being shared with unintended parties.

The United States government uses FOUO (For Official Use Only), Confidential, Secret, and Top-Secret nomenclature to assign protection to government documentation. These systems of classification apply to almost all official documents used in the government bureaucracy. The results of these systems of classification are better explained using Max Weber's conception of bureaucracy. Inherent to Weber's theory is how organizations restrain certain behaviors and promote others to maintain order. According to Weber, order is maintained through the

regulation and implementation of formal and informal rules, and in this case, security regulations. Organizations are said to progress through rationalization and systematization of behaviors. The highly regulated and formally ruled bureaucracy of the United States government has established hierarchies and compartments such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Department of Defense (DOD), National Security Agency (NSA), and several others. These intelligence departments serve the United States in various capacities, but all work toward the mission of national defense.

Because the United States operates with a large but finite budget, these departments must compete for resources, creating intra-government competition. Lutzker (1982) describes how this conflict operates within organizations:

Another model concerns conflict within an organization. The pervasive character of competition is evident not only among individuals but, more importantly, among groups: departments, agencies, bureaus within the structure. The struggle may concern power, but often involves security, autonomy, discretion, and even survival. (p. 23)

In the case of intelligence bodies, funding is their means of survival, and is procured based on their relevance and/or usefulness to the United States. It is in the best interest of intelligence agencies to produce and protect intelligence. This battle for government funding leads to competition between agencies, a marker of bureaucracy set forth by Weber. A by-product of this conflict is the over classification of information.

This paper seeks to examine the tension between bureaucracy and the over-classification of information and seeks to analyze how the words “deep state” mobilize within this system of secrecy to play on the ignorance of the American citizen. As previously mentioned, the ideal American Democracy is one which an informed populace is a main proponent. This paper uses

the rhetoric of Donald Trump as a case to be analyzed for the purpose of exhuming insights about what secretive and divisive rhetoric does to an informed democracy, specifically the words, “deep state”. The country is currently at a crossroads, as we stand a divided nation, political and ideological differences are exploited and amplified through rhetoric. This environment serves as grounds ripe with insights on nation, democracy, and secrecy. How does Weber’s theory of bureaucracy help explain over-classification of information and in turn create a “deep state” narrative with which Donald Trump uses to attack political opponents?

Literature Review

Bureaucracy, information control, classification, and operational systems of secrecy make “deep state” rhetoric a usable term for President Donald Trump. The United States has long been a nation with developing bureaucratic features and a large standing military. The result of almost constant conflict between the United States and foreign nations is the hyper-sensationalized need for “national security”. Part of this “national security” proposition means citizens yield rights, as in the case of the Patriot Act. It also means that the federal government has built robust intelligence agencies with vast classification jurisdiction and information control to combat foreign “threats”. This section reviews pertinent literature on bureaucracy including the Pendleton Act and bureaucracy in the United States, along with literature on information including information secrecy and information accessibility. This section concludes with a discussion of the American “deep state.”

Bureaucracy

Understanding bureaucracy is important to understanding how rhetoric of the “deep state” came to have meaning during the Trump presidency. Understanding bureaucracy’s organization and hierarchy sheds light on how Trump could use governmental bureaucracy to

give the “deep state” significance. The words “deep state” exist with a mysterious connotation that operates under the assumption of a large and compartmentalized government bureaucracy.

What is bureaucracy? What does bureaucracy have to do with government secrecy?

An often-cited framework for organizational bureaucracy is the work of German sociologist Max Weber. Weber’s work is used as a point of departure for many studies which seek to unpack the complexities of a large-scale bureaucracy. Max Weber argued for the use of bureaucracy as a means of organizational sense-making. He argued the structure of bureaucracy stems from a rational-legal authority, evolving from traditional organizational structures with several changes:

1. Jurisdictional areas are clearly specified; activities are distributed as official duties (unlike traditional form where duties delegated by leader and changed at any time).
2. Organization follows hierarchical principle -- subordinates follow orders or superiors but have right of appeal (in contrast to more diffuse structure in traditional authority).
3. Intentional, abstract rules govern decisions and actions. Rules are stable, exhaustive, and can be learned. Decisions are recorded in permanent files (in traditional forms few explicit rules or written records).
4. Means of production or administration belong to the office. Personal property separated from office property.
5. Officials are selected based on technical qualifications, appointed not elected, and compensated by salary.
6. Employment by the organization is a career. The official is a full-time employee and looks forward to a life-long career. After a trial period they get tenure of position and are protected from arbitrary dismissal. (Weber, 1973, p. 477)

These six tenets of bureaucracy were introduced by Weber as an ideal form of organizing. In contrast to the negative connotation bureaucracy carries today, its conception attempted to make organizations more efficient and effective. Weber introduced his theory as a formula to streamline and lean-out organizations (make them more efficient).

Society's understanding of bureaucracy today differs greatly from its origins. When the words are used today there are immediate and sometimes visceral reactions. Bureaucracy is oftentimes synonymous with "red tape," "endless lines," and "putting a stick in your own spoke." These concepts of bureaucracy contest Max Weber's ideal:

Experience tends universally to show that the purely bureaucratic type of administrative organization—that is, the monochromatic variety of bureaucracy—is, from a purely technical point of view, capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency and is in this sense formally the most rational known means of carrying out imperative control over human beings. It is superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in the stringency of its discipline, and in its reliability. It thus makes possible a particularly high degree of calculability of results for the heads of the organization and for those acting in relation to it. It is finally superior both in intensive efficiency and in the scope of its operations and is formally capable of application to all kinds of administrative tasks. (Weber, 1922, p. 56)

This concept was paramount in establishing governance and leadership during the industrial revolution. The times of inefficiency, unkempt records, and administrative malfunction would not be tolerated in the fast-paced and changing world of the industrial revolution. The times required that organizations be flexible and mobile in their pursuits, so they wouldn't trip over their own feet. Weber developed bureaucracy to serve as an ideal system of organizing with legal

authority, moving away from tradition. Furthermore, he introduced six rational tenants to his system, moving from charismatic leadership or “the gift of grace” to meritocracy.

Although many potential advantages of bureaucracy exist today, it is the disadvantages of bureaucracy that we are most familiar with. Some of the disadvantages of bureaucracy are articulated by Daniel Wren and Arthur Bedian in their book *The Evolution of Management Thought*. These bureaucratic malfunctions include:

1. The fact rules, order, and control can take on their own meaning and significance.
2. Past poor decisions may be blindly overlooked because of high devotion to rules and regulations.
3. Because of the compartmentalized nature, subgroups may emerge with their own subcultures which may or may not be productive to the overall goals of the organization.
4. Lastly, because of the number of rules and control, employees may learn what the minimum amount of effort is required of them and only perform to that level.

(Wren & Bedian, 1994, p. 239-241)

This list of deficiencies is the baggage carried with the word bureaucracy today. In its most pure form, bureaucracy is organizational sense-making with an aim to organize information and systems within organizational structures that allow for better performance overall. What happened in the case of the United States Government? The current organization of the government is problematic, as internal departments compete with one another through information hoarding and lack of transparency, perverting the tenants of Weber’s bureaucracy, keeping them from functioning properly. With America’s population explosion during the

industrial revolution, and government growth, the organization of the United States government became hard to manage, therefore the Pendleton Act was created to help manage the chaos.

The Pendleton Act

Bureaucratic traditions are found throughout the structure of the United States government. The United States government originally consisted of only several employees forming three small departments (state, treasury, and war). Today there are more than three million people employed by the federal government. The need to organize the chaos and adopt bureaucracy became urgent as the government expanded. On January 16, 1883 the Pendleton Act was established which called for a merit-based system of appointing and electing government officials and was also intended to monitor government employees' work. The Act was created in response to a disgruntled employee who assassinated President James A. Garfield because of the nature of working for the government at the time and its uncertainty. The act called for stability and control, tenets of Weber's theory, to be enacted to mitigate the chaos of government at the time. In addition to the Act calling for a meritocracy, the Act forbade the firing of any persons due to political reasons and prohibits federal employers to require federal employees to give political service or contributions. This Act led to the establishment of the Civil Service Commission to oversee and enforce the Act's declarations.

In the years after the Commission was established, Andrew Jackson deviated enormously from the intent of the Pendleton Act. Jackson's presidency became known as the "spoils system". During the period during and after the Jackson presidency, employees of the federal government were required to spend more time and more money on political activities to retain positions as well as get hired for new ones. An implosion of the government bureaucracy occurred during the time after Jackson was president. During Jackson's tenure (1829-1837), there were around

20,000 federal employees. By the year 1884 that number rose to more than 130,000. That is an increase of six-and-a-half times in just seven years. This was an unprecedented growth of government that served as a precedent for years to come.

In addition to the politicization of federal jobs, the role the government played in society was becoming increasingly complex. Industrialization was rapidly occurring in the United States during this time, meaning the job of regulators and federal employees who supervise industry was also increasing greatly in complexity. The specialization of government employees meets one of the six criteria of Weber's bureaucracy. The growth and specialization of government was in its early years during this time. Government regulators and overseers made it a point to learn new skills and accommodate the growing economy.

The expansive growth of government and the specialization of government employees' work meant the government was getting too big and too complex too fast. This rapid growth in size and scope caused breakdowns in bureaucracy. In addition to rapid government growth before, during, and after the Jackson presidency, there was also economic strife and uncertainty. The volatile political climate coupled with economic issues led to many Americans to blame the government bureaucracy for their problems and attach negative connotations to the word bureaucracy that follow it to this day.

Bureaucracy in the United States

The establishment of the Pendleton Act, the growing number of federal employees, and their influence on America meant the United States was on its way to becoming one of the largest bureaucracies in the world. There was no stopping the trajectory of government growth and expansion. With large government expansion, many powerful American elites took advantage of the situation. Sociology's "Iron Law of Oligarchy" states that every field of human

endeavor will be led by a small handful of elites (Michels, 1911). In the case of the United States government, it had become a massive, compartmentalized organization, ruled by an elected or appointed elite. The executive branch alone has fifteen departments with appointed leaders at the helm. This system creates competition for appointed positions and competition for resource allocation.

Max Weber categorizes a bureaucracy as having: hierarchy, formal lines of authority, rigid divisions of labor, regular and continuous execution of assigned tasks, all decisions and powers specified and restricted by regulation, officials with expert training in their fields, career advancement dependent on technical qualifications, and qualifications evaluated by organizational rules and not individuals (Weber, 1983). These categories are abundantly clear regarding the American government, especially in the executive branch. This paper aims to focus more specifically on how the rigid division of labor, and the rigid and rule-bound decision-making process can lead to a culture that lacks transparency and hoards information internally. Because of the rigidity of bureaucracy and the strict divisions of labor, compartmentalization of information occurs between the various intelligence organizations in the United States. This compartmentalization can disrupt the passage of information between departments like the FBI, CIA, DOD, and other intelligence agencies in the United States government. This compartmentalization, along with over classification of information means the government bureaucracy often works against itself when trying to solve complex problems or access information.

The 2011 annual report to the President from the Information Security Oversight Office indicated that between the years 2008-2011 the number of classified documents the government produced went from around 23 million to over 92 million. In those few short years, the number

of classified documents had quadrupled. In the year 2008, the United States suffered a major financial crisis which sparked international attention, worry, and speculation. Then, in early 2009 Obama launched what is commonly referred to as the “surge” in Afghanistan. This surge called for 17,000 more boots on the ground which grew the total number to more than 36,000. It was during this period that the government began a shift in its security procedures. Craig Whitlock an investigative journalist for the *Washington Post* authored a piece titled, *At War with the Truth* in December of 2019 that outlines the Government’s secret narrative of the War in Afghanistan. In the article Craig states when the *Washington Post*’s investigation began, the United States government started classifying more information to keep it from the public domain and out of the hands of the Post and other investigative journalists. Additionally, this increase in classification was said to decrease information sharing between agencies within the government.

With a spike in security procedures, many of America’s military operations and government decisions went behind closed doors. This pitted the right of the American people to know versus the need for national security measures. The idea of heightened national security can be seen throughout the nation’s history but was especially prevalent post-9/11. Almost exactly a year after the attacks on 9/11 the Department of Homeland Security was formed. It became readily apparent that the government was responding to the perceived threat of terrorism. A culture of security was becoming a widespread phenomenon throughout the United States during these times.

Through a culture of security, a rise in patriotism, and the alleged ‘threat’ to democracy, the Patriot Act was created to ‘protect’ the American citizen from the threat of terrorism. Although it is not within the scope of this paper to dissect the Patriot Act and its implications, it is an obvious concession made by the American people. The American people gave up certain

aspects of their ‘right to privacy’ to enable the government data gathering apparatus to gather information and create terrorist databases and other pieces of intelligence. Because of the national fear of another terrorist attack (a threat to democracy) the American government, blinded by hypocrisy, increased the budget and government priority of intelligence agencies. The budget allocation and culture shift that made intelligence a larger priority in government made the agencies themselves larger with more facilities and employees, and greatly increased the amount of information they gather and classify. This set the stage for Obama’s surge in Afghanistan and increase in government’s secret information archive.

Classification of documents rose dramatically during the Obama years. Along with keeping information from the public eye, the classification system compartmentalizes information within the government bureaucracy. Because the government secrecy apparatus operates on a “need to know” basis, information becomes privy only to those with an immediate relationship to the content. This need to know basis means if you are not part of a work team or organization operating directly on the specific project, you are not privy to the classified information even if you hold the appropriate clearance. This means an intelligence analyst operating in the FBI with a top-secret clearance is only privy to top secret information on the established need to know basis. If information is collected and produced by a different agency, the information is not automatically shared with other individuals with the appropriate clearance between agencies.

Because information is not shared automatically, it often stays within the organization in which it was produced. This process is problematic as it often creates information silos as Miller and Tucker (2013) explains:

We argue that this contrast between a willingness to share data internally and a lack of willingness to share data externally reflects a tendency for larger systems to create ‘information silos.’ An information silo is a data system that does not exchange data with other similar systems. (p. 77)

Information silos create large bodies of data and intelligence that tend to sit idle for long periods of time. When the information sits on the shelf and is not shared, it becomes inaccessible to other intelligence agencies, leading to blind spots and information mishaps. Furthermore, shelving information can lead to information ‘hoarding’. Much like on the popular TV show *Hoarders*, which showcases ‘junk’ filled homes, hoarding information involves the overcollection of information without organization and the inability for easy access.

Information

Information is the lifeblood of U.S. Intelligence Agencies. Information today has several specific meanings, “It is understood to mean knowledge one gains through study, research, and instruction” (Spira, 2011, p. 36). Intelligence Agencies gather billions of data points to produce information. Data develops into information through the examination of facts resulting in conclusions. Spira (2011) describes this process, “where knowledge and information overlap are that they both mean a body of facts and something that is known” (p. 36). In the case of the United States Government, data is collected and compiled in massive scales. Because of the vast amount of data produced by intelligence gathering, “having the inability to discard or recycle the information, or not to know that this must be done, data hoarding becomes a reality” (Gormley & Gormley, 2012, p. 242). Data hoarding leads to information gaps in the intelligence community because it is not properly dispersed or utilized to contribute to agency missions.

Why is information hoarding problematic in the 21st century? Why does it matter if intelligence agencies do not share information effectively? There are several reasons that make information hoarding an issue: cost, life span of data, and effectiveness. The first issue, cost, is measured in financial costs in electricity, space, and computer hardware to store information. Cost is also measured in the time that information takes to be read, managed and classified. With the amount of information to be classified (over 92 million articles in 2011), timeliness of the classification of information is a massive issue. Intelligence analysts make between \$37,301-\$120,868 per year depending on experience and education level according to government reporting (*usajobs.gov*). The process of managing classified information becomes costly quickly when it takes up days of analysts' time to manage and sort.

The second issue of information hoarding is the short lifespan of data. Because of the evolutions taking place in society, data becomes obsolete at unprecedented rates. Before the year 1959 data experts estimate that a piece of knowledge was "profitable" for 21.8 years. This changed in the 1990s during the dawn of the internet and the technology boom, post-1990 numbers are around 3.2 years of profitability (Ishikawa & Naka, 2007). In the case of intelligence agencies, time is everything. In order to make national security decisions, or policy change, data must be analyzed, sorted, processed, and responded to quickly or it becomes obsolete. Gormley (2012) argued information is "shelved" or tabled much like printed off papers that are oftentimes never referred to. This means information is often forgotten or left out of real-time problem-solving. Lowenthal (2010) describes how data losses effectiveness through shelving:

As with a great deal of existing information, it is not current for long, “It gets outdated”

The value of the information declines since the life span of the data is easily decreased and will reduce the effectiveness of the information. (p. 131)

In the case of intelligence agencies, this has a wide and lasting impact on their effectiveness.

When data is hoarded, it prevents its timely usage rendering it less effective or ineffective, creating intelligence gaps and misunderstandings. When the information is dated, intelligence gaps may emerge, creating negative impacts on national security decision-making and policy choices.

Thirdly, the effectiveness of data becomes an issue when it is hoarded. When information is hoarded it can increase poor communication which may result in false knowledge in the organization. Information hoarding is inherently problematic and creates information gaps, divisions, and false information. Intelligence agencies are comprised of human workers and mistakes and misjudgments happen. Reinardy (2006) describes the humanity in data hoarding after asking participants about the practice:

People will answer this question in different ways, but often they engage in the behavior because it feels good to help others, they like to look/feel intelligent, they want to achieve a sense of security by decreasing uncertainty, and /or they want to avoid anxiety by not making a final decision. (p.307)

Data hoarding is a conscious and unconscious choice and can be conducted to help or sabotage someone’s organization. Whatever one’s motivation for hoarding information, it has material consequences for the organization. When completing projects or working through problems, data hoarding has the potential to disrupt schedules and throw workgroups off balance. As previously

mentioned, data expires rapidly, when delays happen information becomes obsolete, rendering it ineffective or potentially dangerous.

Oftentimes data hoarding increases the length a project takes and the amount of work that must be done to complete it. Ruff (2002) describes how this affects the ability of workgroups to accomplish their task(s), “It’s even tougher to try to do your job when people are robbing you of your effectiveness by hoarding information. And, unfortunately, it happens all the time” (p. 4). The effects of information hoarding can be amplified by cultures of hoarding. When departments must compete for finite resources, “the effectiveness of one department may deter another by not sharing information” (Gromley, 2012, p. 92). This creates a competitive data hoarding culture that can be counterproductive for the mission of the larger organization the departments serve. In the case of the United States government, you have several different intelligence agencies who all serve the president and work towards the ultimate mission of national defense. This becomes problematic when agencies compete and work against each other and hold information and data hostage. Because of the oligarchy of information control that exists in government, and the lack of transparency and information sharing, a culture of secrecy has emerged.

Information Secrecy

Today should offer more government transparency than ever to the average citizen. With the volume of podcasts, social media accounts, and websites producing and sharing information, the average citizen has more access to information than ever before. We can gain access to information thanks to legislation like Sunshine Laws, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), investigatory journalism, and a robust First Amendment. Moves for government transparency have largely succeeded, however, the government still controls the classification system and can hoard and shelve information, keeping it out of the public eye and scope of investigative

journalism. If the public does not know the information exists, they are unable to make Freedom of Information Act requests in the first place.

Unfortunately, this means secrecy persists in contemporary times regardless of the means to access information. The Information Security Oversight Office reported more than 10,000 government secrets are produced each day (archives.gov). With the sheer amount of information being classified it is entirely not possible to uncover all of them. In addition to the mass amount of secrets produced, there are around two million government employees and one million people in private industry with the ability to classify information (Thompson, 1999). Over classification becomes amplified because the reason an official must classify documents lies solely on the fact that the document quotes a classified document. The process of classifying documents that contain quotes from classified documents is called derivative classification, which substantially increases the overall volume of classified documents. One classified document can produce ten-times that amount based on derivative classification.

The emergence of large bodies of classified information, paired with practices of information hoarding have created what experts have declared a “culture of secrecy”. Thompson (1999) explains:

A bipartisan national Commission on Government Secrecy headed by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan recently concluded that a massive "culture of secrecy" has spread with little oversight throughout the government during the past eighty years and has seriously eroded our democratic process.

The effects of secrecy on the democratic process will be further unpacked later in this paper, however, relevant to this section is the “culture” that emerges as a result of the actions of hoarding and classification. One of the foremost organizational culture scholars Edgar Schein

(2004) discusses the impact of organizational culture on the organization in which it emerges, “culture is the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously and define in a basic taken for granted fashion an organization’s view of itself and its environment” (p. 6). Organizational culture has broad and far reaching impacts that affect how organizations operate. An example of culture gone bad is the rise and fall of Enron. Enron was a Wall Street mogul trading at \$90.75 a share at its peak. In December of 2001, after filing bankruptcy, its shares were trading at \$.26. Faulty account reporting and conspicuous investments, fueled through a culture of corporate greed, caused the company to shut its doors, costing investors billions of dollars and putting its workers out of jobs. In the case of the United States government, a culture of secrecy has emerged, negatively impacting the mission of the intelligence community and its mission of serving the people through intelligence gathering and sharing.

Internally, cultures of secrecy are damaging, expensive, and ineffective. They create divides between government agencies and can impact the success of a mission through dating information or hoarding it from the appropriate acting authority. Throughout the last couple decades, more information has been classified than ever before. This means information is becoming secret between members and departments of the government, but also from the people of the United States. This is another potentially dangerous consequence of the increase in classification.

The damage withholding information from the American public has on democracy is described by Senator John Cornyn, a strong transparency advocate, back in 2005 at the freedom of information day conference:

I believe that we must recognize that achieving the true consent of the governed requires something more than just holding elections. What American needs is informed consent. and informed consent is impossible without both a free, responsible press, and an open and accessible government. (Cornyn, 2005, para. 8)

In order to have participation in government elections and protect democracy, an informed body of citizens is paramount. The public's "right to know" has been a long-held political tenant that has survived since the Country's founding. Information is widely produced, shared, and used in today's "information revolution." Information is easily accessible and at the fingertips of most Americans. Around ninety percent of Americans have access to the internet according to the Pew Research Center. This means 9/10 Americans experience near-instantaneous information access. This access would permit a more informed voting body of citizens if the government allowed for information transparency.

Information Accessibility

Easy information access has shaped American culture and American life. Some things are revolutionary and promote democracy and better society. Things like the ability to find cures for illness, information about college, financial advice, access to academic literature are all net positives from the information revolution. But there are also more insidious parts to the internet like the dark web, human trafficking, and potential damage to a user's mental health. New neurological research indicates that humans experience changes in blood dopamine levels when exposed to certain aspects of the internet like receiving a like on their post or finding new or exciting information (Lui & Luo, 2015). Research indicates internet usage has the potential to create similar cranial responses to drug use. Americans are constantly looking for more information to obtain another dopamine hit.

This quest for more information has led social media conglomerates to create algorithms that seek to ‘provoke’ users to interact with certain information. Facebook presents users with only a small fraction of the information flows created by their friends through these algorithms (Constone, 2014). In the process of filtering out information, Facebook prioritizes homophilous content or those which one is more likely to agree (Pariser, 2012). This leads to information silos, potential misinformation, and incomplete information, which may affirm incorrect or unfounded beliefs.

In such an environment, when Trump uses the words “deep state,” his words are (re)shared on social media with those who are more apt to be right-wing Trump supporters. This has the potential to create affirmation circles that push a “deep state” narrative. Spreading false ideas and ideologies is problematic, especially when it affects the beliefs of America’s voters. To further complicate the impact of algorithms on users of social media, Russian actors created fake accounts to manipulate information sharing during the 2016 election cycle (Wells & McMillan, 2017). Multiple reports have uncovered Russian-facilitated social media accounts that promoted certain causes or information directly tied to political messages during the 2016 election cycle (Subrahmanian et al., 2016). In chaotic environments like social media, where affirmation of beliefs is common, it is not hard to see why so many Americans double-down on their beliefs, including that of a “deep state.”

The American “Deep State”

Journalist Robert Worth described the emergence of the “deep state” in his book *A Rage for Order* as originating in Turkey in the 1990s in response to the war being waged between drug traffickers and hit men against a Kurdish insurgency. The American “deep state” is a translation from the Turkish *derin devlet*, which literally means “deep state” or “deep polity”. The term

“deep state” has become more mainstream in America during the years leading up to Donald Trump’s presidency. As political parties in America became more agitated and divisive in the years leading up to Trump’s election, members of the American political right used “deep state” rhetoric to blame governmental misshapes and inexplicable events on the democrat's secretive operations deep within the government.

Prior to the rhetoric propagated by Donald Trump about the American “deep state”, the “deep state” was often understood as simply “the state” (Michaels, 2018). “Deep state” did not carry the same negative connotation it carries today. American democracy has long been broad, deep, and complex, such is the nature of large bureaucratic organizations. Government “red-tape” (used synonymously with bureaucracy) has been under scrutiny by republicans for decades. This rhetoric was especially prevalent during the Reagan administration. This skepticism of government bureaucracy helped the words “deep state” become a successful political tool for the Trump administration. The ideas of ‘small government,’ ‘trickle-down economics,’ ‘cutting the red-tape,’ and ‘deregulation’ are central ideas of the republican party. Trump used skepticism of bigger government and its nebulous nature to garner support for his idea of a secret enemy within the government. “Deep state” rhetoric is about the unknown factors at play in government. Along with the belief that political opponents operate in the “deep state,” it has other implications as well.

Trump can use “deep state” without an explicit definition, giving the words more power than they otherwise might have. He never truly defines exactly what he is referring to, rather he allows the listener to make the inference themselves. This operates around an idea of secrecy. Because of the expansive nature of government, and the monumental intelligence community, government secrecy has become a well-known and accepted phenomenon (Henninger, 2018).

The words “deep state” operate in direct conjunction with the nation’s ‘state of secrecy.’ This allows Trump the ability to accuse his opponents without specifics. The nebulous and secretive government, with expansive and compartmentalized structure, makes it almost incomprehensible to the average citizen. In addition to “deep state’s” ties to government secrecy it has other political/financial implications.

The American “deep state” has been linked to the military-industrial complex. In Dwight D. Eisenhower’s 1961 presidential farewell address he described the military-industrial complex: In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military–industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. (mu.edu). This speech happened a year after the Russians shot down a U-2 spy plane which resulted in the cancelation of a meeting between President Eisenhower and Krushchev. Stephen Cohen argues in his book *War with Russia?* that the plane was shot down by “deep state” operators (Cohen, 2018). This connection between the American “deep state” and the military-industrial complex is one part of the “deep state” theory. Furthermore, Obama made several promises during his campaign that he was not able to accomplish and prominent writers on the American “deep state” argue this was a result of the “deep state’s” work. One of the promises was the closure of Guantanamo Bay (GITMO). Michael J. Glennon, a professor at Tufts University made claims that Obama was unable to close GITMO because of pressures from a “double government” (Smith, 2014). Furthermore, Lofgren (2014) argued Obama was forced into the surge in Afghanistan because of the pressure of the “double government” and military industrial complex.

The idea of an American “deep state” has been adopted by both political parties and has been used to critique politicians on policy, failures to act, and perceived biases. It was not until

the Trump administration's overuse of the word that it became an overwhelmingly right-wing political message. Through Trump's reductionist logic, he has reduced the term to specifically mean democrats, or those working against his political agenda. This action of reductionism has transformed the term, using it as a weapon of defense. When things do not go the way Trump wants, "DEEP STATE" can be used to divert blame.

"Deep state" theory proclaims a hidden, or shadow governing body exists to subvert the elected government. This theory suggests a multi-tiered system is in place behind a veil of secrecy. In addition to being associated with the military-industrial complex, proponents of "deep state" theory suggest intelligence officers and high members of government influence and shape policy by leaking information in order to shape or change outcomes in government (Tharoor, 2017). The United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs released a report in 2017 that found, "the Trump administration was being hit by national security leaks 'on a nearly daily basis' and at a far higher rate than its predecessors encountered" (Crowley, 2017). Trump's reaction to these findings was a double-down approach in his use of "deep state" rhetoric, eliciting a political response from his base.

On several occasions Trump has made mention of a "deep state" that is interfering with his executive agenda (Rucker, 2017). Trump has even weaponized the term "deep state" to attack the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) while advocating the prosecution of Huma Abedin. It is not just President Trump who makes these assertions, but his followers are engaging in similar rhetoric. Right-wing media has articulated a "deep state" organized by Barack Obama to subvert and derail Trump's presidency. This rhetoric has massive implications for democracy and a citizenry engaged in public concern and discourse.

Overall, the contemporary idea of an American “deep state” is something crafted by right-wing media and conspiracy theorists in order to cast blame for shortcomings in the presidential agenda. The United States government is certainly a bureaucracy, but the belief that there is a government-wide conspiracy to subvert the elected government’s agenda seems like a farfetched idea. Charles Krauthammer, a conservative columnist for the Washington Post had this to say about the issue:

I don’t believe in the tooth fairy, the Knights Templar, Bilderberg, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a vast right wing conspiracy, or, for that matter, a vast left wing conspiracy. Are there in the U.S. government individual bureaucrats that are Democratic holdovers that would love nothing more than to damage Trump? Yeah, of course there are. Is there a concealed web of conspirators, malevolent permanent hidden shadow government? Rubbish. And I would add that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone without the help of Ted Cruz’s father. (Hafford, 2017)

This comment was published in Rolling Stone Magazine who added, “Is there actually a “deep state?” If you mean entrenched bureaucracy, then of course there is. If you mean a government-wide conspiracy, then the answer is almost certainly no” (Hafford, 2017). It goes without saying that the American “deep state” is a concoction of ideas and theories by the American political right, that seek to damage or subvert the opposing political party. Although a true “deep state” may not exist, its use and rhetoric in American politics warrant further exploration.

Literature Review Conclusion

This paper reviewed literature on bureaucracy including the Pendleton Act and American bureaucracy, information including information secrecy and accessibility, and a discussion of the American “deep state”. Since the establishment of the Pendleton Act the American government

has grown exponentially, outpacing its ability to organize most effectively in some cases. This has created a break down in bureaucracy, first introduced as a concept by Max Weber who attempted to rationalize and legalize organizational structure and function. Today bureaucracy carries a much different tone including the attached connotation of “red tape”. The idea of an inefficient and inept bureaucracy in America is an idea that Donald Trump has capitalized on to help set the stage for his use of the words “deep state”.

Information in American government has become an overwhelming assortment of (un)classified documents that hold important answers to real-world problems. The issue becomes governmental organizations’ willingness to share and dispense information intragovernmentally. This ‘hoarding’ of information leads to information gaps and mismanagement that has a negative impact on government function. A culture of secrecy has emerged which has also contributed to a backdrop for “deep state” rhetoric.

Lastly, the literature review discussed the concept of “deep state” itself. The American “deep state” is said to be the shadowy, nebulous, secretive entity that runs the government behind the scenes. This “deep state” is said to be connected to money, power, and influence in Washington. In the case of its usage by Donald Trump, and for purposes of this paper, a contemporary conception of “deep state” means democrats, and political enemies of Donald Trump. To provide insight into the words’ usage and rhetorical power, a case study analysis was conducted.

Methods

This paper uses case study analysis as a framework for building discussion around Donald Trump’s use of the words “deep state”. Case studies allow researchers to explore

organizational or individual phenomena, using complex or simple interventions to support the deconstruction and reconstruction of the phenomena (Yin, 2003). Case studies are constructivist in nature, claiming the relativity of truth through emphasizing the social construction of reality (Searle, 1995). An advantage of this approach is the ability to ‘paint a picture’ of the phenomena being studied, while also separating the its pieces to gain a fuller understanding (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Case studies offer certain perspectives that are sometimes lost to other methods through its wholistic approach.

An important part of conducting a case study is framing the case to be studied. This is defined by Miles and Huberman (1994) as, “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. The case is, in effect, your unit of analysis” (p. 25). This paper’s unit of analysis, or case to be studied is Donald Trump’s presidential campaign and presidency, specifically his Tweets to the American people. No other president in history has used Twitter as often as Donald Trump. Trump has used the words “deep state” in press conferences, interviews, and on other social media sites, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to collect such data. The researcher aims to use Twitter specifically because of the frequency and massive audience of Trump’s Tweets. There are dozens of news articles addressing Trump’s use of Twitter, on article from the New York Times in November of 2019, talks about his presidency through over 11,000 Tweets! Twitter provides a manageable scope and dataset to be analyzed for this case study.

This study then takes advantage of exploratory analysis defined by Yin (2003) as the type of case study used, “to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes” (p. 27), to makes sense of the effects of “deep state” rhetoric on the American public and democracy. Furthermore, this paper uses explanation analysis to make advance the argument that the words “deep state” are terribly damaging to American democracy

when used by the President of the United States. The analysis will suggest how the words “deep state” are weaponized by Donald Trump with dramatic consequences.

Case Study Discussion and Analysis

Introduction

First, this section connects bureaucracy, information, and secrecy to the “deep state” by discussing the four malfunctions of bureaucracy (Wren & Bredian, 1994). Secondly, this section discusses Donald Trump’s weaponization of the words, “deep state”. Third the section reviews Trumps Tweets including the words, “deep state” dating back to the start of 2016. The researcher categorized twenty-nine Tweets into five groups: retweets, attack on authorities, endorsement for the “deep state”, attacks on the democrats and media, and attacks on the democrats specifically. Lastly, the sections discuss what the ramifications are for American democracy, arguing President Trump’s use of the words “deep state” is problematic and has serious consequences.

Analysis

Bureaucracy, Information, Secrecy

Wren and Bredian (1994) presented four malfunctions of bureaucracy:

1. The fact rules, order, and control can take on their own meaning and significance.
2. Past poor decisions may be blindly overlooked because of high devotion to rules and regulations.
3. Because of the compartmentalized nature, subgroups may emerge with their own subcultures which may or may not be productive to the overall goals of the organization.
4. Lastly, because of the number of rules and control, employees may learn what the minimum amount of effort is required of them and only perform to that level.

These four malfunctions serve as a point of departure for a look into the emergence of “deep state” rhetoric. The word ‘bureaucracy’ has power in and of itself to create feelings of contempt from small-government right-wing conservatives. Large numbers of Trump supporters endorse the idea of “draining the swamp”, getting rid of Washington bureaucrats, and creating a smaller federal government. The mention of bureaucracy goes against those values, as it has been used by Trump synonymously with words like “inefficient”, “red-tape”, and “getting in the way”.

The first malfunction of bureaucracy states rules, order and control take on their own meaning. Control has certainly taken on its own role when it comes to information within the United States government. As previously mentioned, controlling information is a large part of operations in the intelligence community. After 9/11, the intelligence communities have remained hyper-protective of information, so it doesn’t fall into the wrong hands. This idea has extended to include interagency hoarding within the government. Instead of information staying out of ‘terrorist’ hands, it is kept out of the hands of members of the same working intelligence team. The vehicle for keeping information out of competing agency’s hands is the over classification of information. Something that has been incredibly popular post-9/11. Over classification also means more government secrets, and less information available to journalists and the general public. This culture of secrecy creates popular speculation resulting in conspiracies like the “deep state” conspiracy.

The second malfunction of bureaucracy states that a high devotion to rules and regulations can lead to overlooking past mistakes. The intelligence community is ruled by regulations, rules, and policies that are regularly adhered to. These policies and rules are set to govern the behavior of the individuals in the community. Because the volume of rules and regulations is incredibly high, the ability to be flexible, change, and evolve becomes stagnant.

This is what gives the United States Government the reputation of repeating its mistakes. The government is designed to operate ‘full speed ahead’ bound by strict rules and regulations which are not to be deviated from. This does not allow for proper reflexivity of past action. Because procedures must be followed and adhered to, mistakes are repeated, and bureaucracy is seen as ‘winning’. This further damage bureaucracy’s image in the public eye by showing it inflexibility.

The third malfunction is most relevant to this paper as it appropriately explains what has happened in the intelligence community. Because of the compartmentalized nature of the United States government and the strict competition for resources, the various intelligence departments often work against each other. One of the easiest ways for intelligence agencies to do harm each other is by withholding data, the lifeblood of the intelligence community. Through systems of classification, the intelligence agencies harm each other and harm their overall mission of national defense. This battle within the government is sometimes explained through conspiracy theories, one being that the “deep state” is operating within the government.

Lastly, the fourth malfunction is a stereotypical view of the government worker. Many Americans believe government employees to be lazy, only doing the bare minimum to stay employed. The children’s film *Zootopia* uses an excellent depiction of this stereotype in their Department of Motor Vehicle scene where all the workers are sloths (one of the slowest moving animals). This view of government is embedded with the idea of an inefficient and malfunctioning bureaucracy, directly related to the way in which Donald Trump uses the words “deep state”. When Donald Trump uses “deep state” to attack the malfunctioning of government, he is attacking the entrenched bureaucracy, and the ‘sloths’ that work within it.

These four malfunctions are used to critique the United States government as inefficient and clumsy. This widespread attack on bureaucracy is leveraged when Donald Trump uses the

words “deep state” when referring to political opposition. The strong hatred for bureaucracy and inefficient government is a long-standing republican tradition. Conservatives have long been anti-big government and would rather see a hands-off approach with limited regulation, “deep state” animates this argument. By inferring the strong connection and associations conservatives have for deep state and its association with bureaucracy and big-government, emotions are easily manipulated by Donald Trump when he attacks others using “deep state”.

The “Deep State” Weaponized

During Trump’s campaign he used the slogan, “Drain the Swamp” to refer to his proposed attempt at dismantling the entrenched bureaucratic nature of government in Washington. During his presidency however, the focus of his rhetoric shifted and focused on attacking the “deep state” as a similarly divisive political campaign. As previously mentioned, it was not only Trump who used these words, but also members of his cabinet and other right-wing politicians and media correspondents. The idea of a widespread “deep state” is a widely adopted idea by the Republican Party.

Trump has used the words “deep state” to vilify attempts to work against his agenda. When he is frustrated and opposed, the words are often used. When Trump proposed a complete shutdown of Muslims entering the country that was put on hold by the courts, he referred to the opposition as the “deep state” working against him. When information was leaked about Michael Flynn's lies about contracts with Russia, Trump blamed the “deep state”. When the judicial system issued rulings, Trump did not agree with, he blamed the “deep state”. It was no surprise in March 2017 when a reporter asked former White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer, “Does the government believe that there is such a thing as a ‘deep state’ that is actively working to undermine the president?” Spicer replied:

I think that there's no question when you have eight years of one party in office that there are people who stay in government — affiliated with, joined — and continue to espouse the agenda of the previous administration, so I don't think it should come to any surprise that there are people that burrowed into government during the eight years of the last administration and may have believed in that agenda and want to continue to seek it (dailybeast.com, 2017).

Spicer and those who have closely worked with Trump are quick to point out that supporters of the Obama Administration are still present in government and work to subvert the President. Along with those left over from the Obama administration are new political rivals like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who have gotten similar treatment from President Trump in his reference to their actions as the work of the “deep state”.

Further evidence of Trump using the term “deep state” is found on Twitter. Upon searching through Trump’s Twitter for “deep state” mentions, twenty-nine relevant results appear in two-and-a-half years’ time. Trump uses the words to attack Hillary Clinton, the court system, the Department of Justice, and other political opponents. In a Tweet on September 19, 2018 Trump writes, “Great new book by Jason Chaffetz appropriately called the “deep state”. Very interesting indeed!”. The Tweet garnered 16.8k retweets and 74.5k likes. Jason Chaffetz is a retired American Republican politician whose subtitle of the book reads: “How an Army of Bureaucrats Protected Barack Obama and Is Working to Destroy the Trump Agenda”. The book aims to illustrate how the American “deep state” works in opposition to Trump’s political agenda by seeking to protect people like Obama and Hillary and other opposing political interests. Readers of the book appear to be entrenched about the idea of an American “deep state”, with one of the Amazon reviews for the book reading, “The “deep state” is real. They don’t like

exposure, accountability, or responsibility. They fight back, outlast, and work the system to their advantage... In fact, just the opposite is true. The “deep state” is unconstitutional, organized, and exceptionally good at protecting themselves from supervision” (amazon.com).

This book is one of thousands of books about the American “deep state”. A quick search on the internet will yield a few-thousand titles concerned with an American “deep state”, the vast majority from republican authors. The idea of an American “deep state” is not something just on the political fringes of the republican party. This idea has been propagated by Trump and his officials and has trickled down throughout the party. This right-wing idea is not conceptualized as a parallel government, it is understood as any person or group of people that aim to subvert the president’s agenda. This idea has permeated the American-right and has serious implications. With such large amounts of republicans buying into an American “deep state”, a properly informed citizenry and the voting democracy are in danger.

Donald Trump’s Twitter

Twenty-nine tweets were pulled from Donald Trump’s Twitter with mention of the “deep state”. The data was categorized into five groups based on how the words “deep state” were used. These five groups are: retweets of Tweets including the words “deep state”, attacks on the United States judicial system and courts, personal endorsement of the “deep state”, attacks of the democrats and medias conspiratorial nature, and attacks on democrats directly. The data presented itself in the following way:

Type	Number of	Dates (Month and Year)
Retweets	11	Jun 2017, Mar 2019 (2), Apr 2019, May 2019 (2), Oct

		2019 (2), Dec 2019, Jan 2020, Feb 2020
Attack on Authorities	6	Nov 2017 (2), Jan 2018, May 2018, Jul 2018, Jul 2019
Endorsement	4	Sep 2018, May 2019, Jul 2019, Mar 2020
Attack of Dems and Media	4	Sep 2018, Sep 2019 (2), Oct 2019
Attack on Dems	4	Oct 2019 (2), Nov 2019 (2)

This data shows Trump used his Twitter to attack the judicial system of the United States, attack political opponents, undermine the news media, and to Retweet and endorse support for the “deep state” conspiracy.

Donald Trump has 76.1 million follows on Twitter at the time this paper was written. That is over 20% of the population of the United States. But the cart does not stop there, Tweets regularly appear shared on Facebook and other social media cites increasing the reach of Donald Trump’s Twitter into the hundreds of millions. Furthermore, because Donald Trump has developed such a reputation for Twitting, his Tweets are often shared on mainstream media outlets including CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, and the Associated Press. Trump has massive reach through his Tweets.

Donald Trump’s use of Twitter to propagate the “deep state” conspiracy reaches hundreds of millions of people. This is overtly problematic, as social psychology tells us, social power can be defined as the ability of a person to create conformity even when the people being

influenced may attempt to resist those changes (Fiske, 1993; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). This conformity is reached through repetition of messages by an authority figure, in this case the president of the United States.

What Does This Mean for Democracy?

Verelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954) wrote in their highly regarded American political text, *The Democratic Citizen* about the American voter who is, “expected to be well informed about political affairs. He is supposed to know what the issues are, ... what the relevant facts are, what alternatives are proposed, [and] what the likely consequences are” (p. 308). When politicians use the perversion of truth for political gain, it undermines the democratic process. Without a properly educated and informed citizenry, the quest for democracy cannot exist. When Trump uses “deep state” rhetoric, he not only alienates alternative views, he undermines the country’s ability to uphold and sustain democracy.

Additionally, the idea of preserving democracy through an informed citizenry is articulated well in Delli Carpini and Keeter’s (1996) *Political Information is to Democratic Politics*, as they wrote:

Political information is to democratic politics... what money is to economics; it is the currency of citizenship" (p. 8) ... “More concretely, such facts as the percentage of the American public living below the poverty line, how the line is determined, and how the percentage has changed over time provide a foundation for deliberation about larger issues. They prevent debates from becoming disconnected from the material conditions they attempt to address. (p. 11)

Correct information is the currency of democracy, if misinformation is propagated, it has the potential to mislead and misinform the citizenry. Manipulation is not uncommon in politics,

however, when a sitting president deliberately chooses misleading rhetoric, his actions should be called into question. What are the consequences of such actions?

This question starts to delve into somewhat uncharted territory. The question of the effects of a sitting president using rhetoric of this type in an age of social media has yet to be studied. One may turn to the study of language itself to begin to understand the phenomena at hand. Saul (2016) wrote about “dogwhistles” and their impact on American politics. The term dogwhistle is a term first used by political journalists in the 1980s and is described by Saul (2016) in the following way:

The idea of a political dogwhistle shifted somewhat over the next decades (from journalist usage) to focus mainly on a kind of deliberate manipulation, usually by politicians (or their handlers), designed to be unnoticed by most of the public.

Every time Trump uses the words, “deep state” there is a message being (re)produced to the American people that there is a secretive government body who works against the President and his agenda. To the average voter, the production of this message is often not met with critical intellectual vigor and skepticism. The idea of an American “deep state” is a well-written about phenomena that is widely circulated by the political right. The reproduction of such rhetoric by Donald Trump only provides further legitimacy for their case.

Politicians who use divisive, colored language is not something new. Election cycles and political campaigns regularly bash opposing candidates. What is not common is a sitting president who constantly bashes political rivals, the media, and those who disagree with his decisions. Trump has successfully weaponized the words, “deep state” to manipulate his base. These words have serious implications that include the degradation of a properly informed citizenry. This diminishing base of properly educated voters means democracy is threatened.

Every time Trump uses the words “deep state” he does so at the expense of democracy. In this section, Trump’s Tweets were analyzed, arguing Trump uses the term “deep state” often and in impactful circumstances. Because Trump can reach so many people with his message, his words have misled millions.

Discussion

The election of Donald Trump in 2016 sparked a new era of American politics. It was a true and remarkable display of how someone with no political experience or background could enter the political arena and defeat someone who was an established politician. The world was surprised by the election of Donald Trump. Most Americans and people around the world expected Hillary Clinton to be president of the United States. From Trump’s campaign and into his presidency, his rhetoric has been a point of heated debate. Trump’s use of the words, “deep state” comes at the center of an out-of-hand right-wing conspiracy theory. It is rather obvious that a legitimate, large-scale, secretive government working against Trump seems implausible, however Trump’s ability to plant the idea in his constituents' heads introduces interesting questions for democracy.

To fully understand the scale of such a matter, one must understand how the media currently operates in America. Social media is relied on more than ever to access information and news. According to a 2011 Pew research study 62% of Americans get their news from social media (pewresearch.org). A 2018 poll shows more Americans get their news from social media than print newspapers. Because so many Americans have access to the internet and social media, politicians have direct access to their constituents, meaning they can communicate directly to their supporters. Trump made 29 Tweets alone about the American “deep state” in a span of only a couple years. Trump has 72.6 million followers on Twitter, meaning he has direct access to

72.6 million peoples' screens, and therefore minds. When Trump Tweets about the American "deep state" he is producing a message to tens-of-millions of followers. Through social media algorithms and online sharing, the number of interactions to online posts can be ten-fold. The power of such communication tools is hard to comprehend and is somewhat of a new frontier to be studied and explored, as its implications appear to be far-reaching and constantly evolving.

In addition to using Twitter, Trump has a strong presence on Facebook and Instagram where he shares his messages with millions more Americans. If you consider the media interviews, Tweets, Facebook posts, Instagram posts, press conferences, State of the Union Addresses, and other broadcasted events, Trump's reach becomes monumental. A New York Times investigation in 2019 shows the danger in Trump having such a platform. In the report, the Times claims Trump, "retweeted 217 accounts that have not been verified by Twitter, at least 145 of which have pushed conspiracy or fringe content, including more than two dozen that have since been suspended by Twitter" (McIntire, 2019). In addition to the use of "deep state" rhetoric, the unvetted practice of retweeting conspiratorial material by a sitting president requires further exploration beyond the scope of this paper.

In addition to the reach of Donald Trump through social media, he also produces content in a staggering volume. In the first two-and-a-half years of being president, Trump has Tweeted more than 17,000 times. Trump has Tweeted a tremendous amount over the last couple of years, to a large audience, which makes his misleading rhetoric about the American "deep state" hugely problematic. Social media interactions have serious potential to effect and influence cognition, materializing in behavioral action (Fischer, 2001). It is entirely possible that inundation with messages of an American "deep state" could lead to altered voter behavior if you believe in the message.

The intelligence apparatus in the United States is massive, with thousands of employees and dozens of departments and agencies. With its far-reaching power to classify information and withhold it from the public, and its compartmentalized nature, it is no question how this could be interpreted as nebulous by the average citizen. With the astronomical amount of classified information produced in the United States, and the compartmentalized system of American government, it is easy to see how a conceptual “deep state” could emerge. Weber’s theory of bureaucracy helps explain the rationalization that took place in organizing the American government, leading to its increased compartmentalization. Although Weber’s articulation of his theory stemmed from a move toward efficiency, it has now adopted a negative connotation, and is used as prey for rhetoric of a “deep state”.

A poll conducted in 2017 by the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center, demonstrates how little the average American knows about the constitution or government in general. More than one in three people (37%) could not name a single right protected by the First Amendment. Only one in four (26%) could name all three branches of the government. One in three (33%) could not name any branch of government. A majority (53%) believe the Constitution affords undocumented immigrants no rights, contrary to the fact that everyone in America is afforded the right to due process and the right to defend themselves in court. Americans do not possess a basic understanding of their government, or the document, which is the blueprint to the nation, the Constitution. To suggest that the average American can comprehend and understand an extensive bureaucracy, which operates with a culture of secrecy, without being subject to the idea of a “deep state” is implausible.

Because of the dedicated and expansive following of the President, his use of the words “deep state” have afforded him the opportunity to alienate democrats in furtherance of his

political agenda. The average American or Trump backer does not possess the understanding and comprehension of government to be able think seriously and critically about the idea of an elusive, secretive government of Anti-Trumpers looking to take him down. It is this paper's ultimate suggestion that the use of the words, "deep state" by Donald Trump have diminished the country's ability to think critically about how the government operates, imposing on the Nation's democratic process. The President has been successful in using "deep state" rhetoric to excite crowds and mock his political rivals, at great expense to the Nation.

Democracy, a word which stands the test of time in America, stands threatened by an insider, someone sworn to protect it, the President of the United States. Through repeated and deliberate use of the words "deep state", Donald Trump has successfully damaged American democracy by creating false narratives and dividing political parties. Trump has exacerbated the effects of the words "deep state" through Twitter, reaching millions of Americans. The impact and results of Trump's Twitter bar further analysis and research in the future.

Conclusion

This paper used Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy to explain the compartmentalized nature of government that exists in the United States. Bureaucracy helps explain information hoarding and compartmentalization, leading to a culture of secrecy within the government. The culture of secrecy affects government operation and contributes to the nebulous perception of the American government. Cultures of secrecy and their shadowy nature have led to a right-wing conspiracy theory of the "deep state". Rhetoric of the "deep state" has been used by Donald Trump and his officials to refer to those who oppose his political agenda. Trump's use of the words "deep state" are widely circulated and have appeared on his social media accounts which reach millions of people.

Because of the conspiracy theory associated with the words “deep state”, Trump can illicit visceral feelings from his political base. The words have been used to further drive a wedge between republicans and democrats in this country. In the years leading up to Trump’s election and the years immediately following, America has experienced mass movements for social and political change. With the killings of unarmed black men, the unveiling of sexual harassment and assault by powerful white men in the media, and a gun control crisis, many are moving for change and attempting to create a safer, more inclusive country. Attempting to tackle these problems has not proved easy, and the result is a divided political climate. When Trump uses the words “deep state” to refer to political opposition, he is furthering an us-versus-them mentality.

A well-known set of experiments were conducted in social psychology called the *Minimal Group Paradigm*. Henri Tajfel, who was a prisoner of war during World War II wanted to understand how one group could discriminate against members of an outgroup. So, in the 1960s he conducted a series of experiments by assigning people randomly to groups based on flipping a coin. In one experiment he assigned people to groups based on their estimation of the number of dots on a page. No matter the subject’s answer, he would randomly assign them to a group labeled, “over-estimators” or “under-estimators”. Next the subjects had to distribute money to individuals in the experiment, with only their group identity to go off. The subjects would consistently distribute more money to the members of their group.

Contemporary studies have used functional magnetic resource imaging (fMRI) to map brain images of people viewing someone getting their finger rubbed by a Q-tip or pricked by a needle. When the person being pricked was labeled with the participant’s religion, they would “feel” the physical pain through brain activity. This demonstrated the strong empathy people feel

for people who are like them. These researchers and others who study empathy consistently refer to humans' tendency towards tribalism.

It seems humans have an innate and anthropological need to live in supportive communities. These communities have helped humanity survive and thrive in groups of one hundred to around one-hundred-and-fifty people, however, when communities grow to include millions of people, tribalism becomes divisive and problematic. In the case of our current political climate, tribalism has created a large divide between republicans and democrats in this country. Donald Trump's use of the words "deep state" has done nothing but further divide the country, creating a hostile and undermining political discourse, weakening the United States ability to focus on major issues at hand: climate change, racism, wage inequality, and healthcare to name a few. The author of this paper has more hope than ever that people will continue to tenaciously pursue the next right thing. An awakening is happening in this country, and as journalist and activist Erin Brockovich proclaims, "take a deep breath, and act." Democracy is at stake, and now is the time to act.

References

- Bartels, L. (1996). Uninformed Votes: Information Effects in Presidential Elections. *American Journal of Political Science*, 40(1), 194-230. doi:10.2307/2111700
- Berelson, B. R., Lazarsfeld, P. F., McPhee, W. N., & McPhee, W. N. (1954). *Voting: A study of opinion formation in a presidential campaign*. University of Chicago Press.
- Bob. (n.d.) Information is Power: Coping with an Information Hoarder at work.
- Cohen, Stephen F. (2019). War with Russia?. Skyhorse Publishing, Inc. p. 190.
- Constine, J. (2014). Why is Facebook Page Reach Decreasing? More Competition and Limited Attention.
- Cornyn, J. (2005). FOI and the consent of the governed. Speech for National FOI Day Conference. Washington, DC: First Amendment Center. Retrieved April 1, 2006, from <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/commentary.aspx?id=14993>
- Crowley, Michael (September–October 2017). "The “deep state” Is Real". Politico Magazine. Retrieved September 5, 2017.
- Davis, Julie Hirschfeld (March 6, 2017). "Rumblings of a “deep state” Undermining Trump? It Was Once a Foreign Concept". The New York Times.
- "Eisenhower's Farewell Address to the Nation". mcadams.posc.mu.edu. Retrieved August 9, 2017.
- Fischer, E., & Reuber, A. R. (2011). Social interaction via new social media:(How) can interactions on Twitter affect effectual thinking and behavior?. *Journal of business venturing*, 26(1), 1-18.

- Gormley, C. J., & Gormley, S. J. (2012). Data hoarding and information clutter: The impact on cost, life span of data, effectiveness, sharing, productivity, and knowledge management culture. *Issues in Information Systems*, 13(2), 90-95.
- Hafford, Michael (March 9, 2017). "'deep state': Inside Donald Trump's Paranoid Conspiracy Theory – Rolling Stone". *Rollingstone.com*. Retrieved May 29, 2019.
- Ishikawa, A., & Naka, I. (2007). *Knowledge Management and Risk Strategies*. Hackensack, NJ: World Scientific.
- Lowenthal, B. (2010). Hoarding Disorder. *Brandweek*. 11/1/2010, 51(39), 20.
- Liu, M., & Luo, J. (2015). Relationship between peripheral blood dopamine level and internet addiction disorder in adolescents: a pilot study. *International journal of clinical and experimental medicine*, 8(6), 9943.
- Lindsey, Jason Royce (2013). *The Concealment of the State*. Bloomsbury. ISBN 978-1-4411-7245-7.
- Lofgren, Mike (February 21, 2014). "Essay: Anatomy of the 'deep state'". *BillMoyers.com*. Retrieved February 13, 2020.
- Marshall W. Meyer, "Organizational Structure as Signaling," *Pacific Sociological Review* 22 (1979), p. 484.
- Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, ed. and trans. Edward A. Shils and Henry H. Finch (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1949). (Originally published 1914—1917.)
- Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, ed. Talcott Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1947), p. 337. (Originally published 1922.)

- McIntire, Mike; Yourish, Karen; Buchanan, Larry (November 2, 2019). "In Trump's Twitter Feed: Conspiracy-Mongers, Racists and Spies". The New York Times. ISSN 0362-4331. Retrieved November 2, 2019.
- Michaels, J. D. (2017). The American “deep state”. Notre Dame L. Rev., 93, 1653.
- Miller, A. R., & Tucker, C. (2014). Health information exchange, system size and information silos. *Journal of health economics*, 33, 28-42.
- Michels, R. (1911). Political Parties (1962), Nueva York.
- Pariser, E. (2012). The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web Is Changing What We Read and How We Think (Reprint edition). New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books.
- Reinardy, R. (2006). Information Hoarding: The Need to Know and Remember. OCD Newsletter. Late Fall, 2006, 14-15.
- Rucker, Phillip; Costa, Robert; and Parker, Ashley (March 5, 2017). "Inside Trump's fury: The president rages at leaks, setbacks and accusations". The Washington Post.
- Ruff, J. (2002). Information overload: Causes, symptoms and solutions. *Harvard Graduate School of Education*, 1-13.
- Schein, E. H. (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership* (Vol. 2). John Wiley & Sons.
- Smith, Jordan Michael (October 18, 2014). "Vote all you want. The secret government won't change". Boston Globe. Retrieved August 22, 2017.
- Spira, J. (2011). Overload! How too much information is Hazardous to your organization. Hoboken, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc
- Subrahmanian, V. S., Azaria, A., Durst, S., Kagan, V., Galstyan, A., Lerman, K., ... & Menczer, F. (2016). The DARPA Twitter bot challenge. *Computer*, 49(6), 38-46.

Taub, Amanda; Fisher, Max (February 16, 2017). "As Leaks Multiply, Fears of a "deep state" in America". The New York Times.

The Daily Beast. (2017, April 11). Spicer: 'No Question' the Anti-Trump "deep state" Exists.

Retrieved from <https://www.thedailybeast.com/cheats/2017/03/10/spicer-no-question-the-anti-trump-deep-state-exists>

"The Turkish Origins of the "deep state"", jstor.org, April 10, 2017

Tharoor, Ishaan (February 1, 2017). "Is Trump fighting the "deep state" or creating his own?". The Washington Post.

Thompson, D. F. (1999). Democratic secrecy. *Political Science Quarterly*, 114(2), 181-193.

Visitchaichan, S. (2004). Revisiting Weber's Theory of Bureaucracy and its Usefulness for Analyzing Organizational Structures and Issues. *Thai Journal of Public Administration*, 2(2), 127-127.

Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, p. 328. See also Max Weber, "The Three Types of Legitimate Rule," trans. Hans Gerth, *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 4 (1958), pp. 1—11. (Originally published 1922.)

Max Weber, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, ed. and trans. Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 196—294. (Originally published in 1922.)

Weber, M., & Miller, S. M. (1963). Max Weber; selections from his work. New York: Crowell.

Weber, M. (1983). On capitalism, bureaucracy and religion. Max Weber on a selection of texts, George Allen & Unwin, London.

Weigel, David (March 7, 2017). "Trump and Republicans see a "deep state" foe: Barack Obama". The Washington Post.

Winter, Jana; Groll, Elias (August 10, 2017). "Here's the Memo That Blew Up the NSC".

Foreign Policy. Retrieved August 15, 2017.

Worth, Robert F. (2016). *A Rage for Order: The Middle East in Turmoil, from Tahrir Square to ISIS*. Pan Macmillan. p. 139.

Wren, D. A., & Bedeian, A. G. (1994). *The evolution of management thought*.

U.S. Office of Information Security Oversight Office. *Report to the President of the United States, 2011*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2011.